

## ARTICLE

IDENTIFICATION, AND RANKING OF MARKETING STRATEGIES  
IN HANDICRAFT INDUSTRIES OF FARS PROVINCE IRAN WITH  
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## ABSTRACT

Handicraft industry is an appropriate means for attracting investment and developing production circle. It is also a part of Iran national wealth that needs major consideration for maintenance and modernization. It seems this industry will be developed through domestic and foreign marketing, advertising, and attracting private sectors' support. Regarding so, this study tries to identify and rank marketing strategies in Fars province, Iran, handicrafts. First of all, these strategies were identified by applying Delphi technique, and then, they were ranked by Analytic hierarchical process in a way that the data could be used as a framework to improve and develop handicraft industry. Samples included 30 workers of handicraft industry from Cultural Heritage Organization and Cooperative Unions of Fars Province, Iran. The present study is conducted based on the descriptive-survey methodology. Questionnaires were considered as tools for collecting the data. After all, five main strategies (product, price, promotion, distribution, artistic protection, and historical authenticity) and also 43 indices were identified. For these five strategies, ranking based on the AHP resulted in the followings. The product strategy owned the first priority, and other strategies such as price, promotion, historic and artistic originality were organized as subsequent ones that they have least significance distribution.

## INTRODUCTION

Marketing strategies has become one of the key strategies in competitive business environment for increasing and retainment of the company profitability, and guaranteeing its business future [1]. Marketing strategy looks for decision-making strategies for the type of business that a company should follow in its prospect to see what product, price, promotion and distribution should be taken into the consideration in target markets competitive environments in future [2]. However it is as the result of investigating customers' behaviors that helps marketers in satisfying consumers' needs [3]. Marketing is a comprehensive system of business act designed to plan, price, promote, and distribute the desired and satisfactory products for the target markets to accomplish organizational objectives [4]. Manufacturing, marketing, and distribution of handicrafts requires paying attention to the many complex variables [5]. Over 150 different handicraft fields are recognized in Iran in 24 different groups created by many artists and innovators who are very active, but there is no significant plan for handicraft products advertising and marketing. For the reason that development of sales and success of products seem impossible without advertisement in today's intense competitive market, current situation leads to the isolation of Iranian handicraft products in economical fields. Iranian craftsmen have always had the dream of joining to international markets because of the lack of standard inspections, branding and unsuccessful marketing in international markets [6].

Handicraft industry gives a value to the innate creativity in a society. It is also the "heirlooms" inherited from past. They not only have a cultural significance, also create social and economic growth. They are helpful in keeping valuable heritage alive through providing a reference to the bygone times. Globalization has made it possible for these handicrafts to aim a wider emand [7]. Handicraft industry provides job opportunities to a large section of poor in society. However, the role and importance of such industry to the national development has been declined. In fact, his industry faces a lot of problems such as man power, material, methods, machines, money, marketing and management [8]. Artisans face several problems in marketing. By shortage of financial resources and small scale of operation advertising publicity cannot be undertaken by artisans [9].

The market of Iranian handicrafts is not in proper conditions. In handicraft shops, rather facing beautiful and authentic Iranian handicrafts, you are noticed by low quality foreign goods and handicrafts. Also, there are few innovations in production of handicrafts that lots of them are still produced by methods date back to the decades ago. As a result, it lessens the motivation and interest for domestic and foreign consumers. One of the key factors that has led to a reduction in marketing of these valuable products is known as the lack of attention to the modern marketing and entrepreneurship principles and basics. It has resulted in the loss of competitive advantages of Iranian handicrafts in the national and global level, Iranian market reduction, an increase in prices, sales reduction, reduction of job opportunities and handicrafts drawback as a cultural problem. Afterward, identification of marketing strategies in a way that the achieved results could be used as a framework for improvement of production and selling of handicrafts is a necessity for conducting the present study. prioritizing and applying these strategies, as followed by the same study, can

## KEY WORDS

Delphi technique,  
Handicrafts, Hierarchical  
method of analysis, Fars  
Province, Marketing  
strategies

Received: 11 Sept 2016

Accepted: 13 Oct 2016

Published: 18 Nov 2016

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accelerate the development of this industry. Therefore, the present paper objective is to find the key marketing strategies and its indices in the succession of handicraft industry. Doing so, present study tries to answer three fundamental questions:

1. What are the handicraft marketing strategies in Fars province, Iran, achieved by application of reviewing related literature and Delphi method?
2. What is the ranking of handicraft marketing strategies and their relative importance in Fars province, Iran, through the conducting Analytical Hierarchical Process?
3. What are the solutions for an effective development of marketing strategies in Fars province, Iran, with an emphasize on main principles?

In order to answer the above mentioned questions, we reviewed the related literature, the concept of strategy, and the combined marketing. This study relies on reviewing the experts and elites' feedbacks. The level of importance and effectiveness of existing indices in every one of the combined factors were studied first, and after that, factors and elements of handicraft industry marketing strategies were ranked by utilizing *the analytic hierarchy process* (AHP). Finally, solutions and suggestions were presented for an effective handicrafts industry development.

A lot of studies have been carried out on marketing strategy and handicrafts all over the world.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is a descriptive study. Considering the objectives, it can be replaced in category of applied studies. The sample and participants were included the employers and staffs in handicraft industries of Cultural Heritage Organization and the members of Handicraft Cooperative Union in Fars Province, Iran. The number of 30 members were selected from the elites among whom 11 members were handicraft experts of Cultural Heritage Organization and the rest were members of the Handicraft Cooperative Union. For collecting data two questionnaires were prepared. One of the questionnaires was designed for identifying the main strategies in handicraft marketing and indexing them on the basis of Delphi method. Applying this questionnaire, the views of experts about identifying main strategies in handicraft marketing and their ranking were collected. The other questionnaire was planned for measuring the importance value of main strategies in handicraft marketing and their criteria based on the Thomas. L. Saaty 9 scale and AHP method. Considering the applied method of data collection in this study the obtained results have rational justifiability (content). In Delphi questionnaire, the nature of Delphi method, the output and input questionnaires, applying views, and the reliability of the questionnaire were performed during the Delphi procedure which was not measured by the relationships. In comparing the questionnaires, all strategies and indices were juxtaposed, and therefore, there was no need to measure the reliability. In the present study, the ratio of inconsistency was measured for certainty of the reliability of data collection tools based on the classic algorithm of AHP and measurements through Crisp numbers. The measured ratio of inconsistency for the questionnaire number 2 was 0.02, and since this value is less than 0.1, it was considered as an acceptable value.

### Introduction of the model of handicraft marketing strategy

Marketing is the general system of designing activities of a career for planning, price tagging, promotion, distribution, and production for targeting the market in order to meet organizational objectives [4]. In order to create effective marketing strategies, marketing experts have mostly considered the factors of product, people, promotion, participation, and packaging [10]. Marketing strategy is closely related to the marketing mix strategy [11]. It means that it contains two separated factors, but somehow closely related, that is related to the marketing mix strategy [12].

It can be claimed that one of the important and effective factors considered by planners and producers of this sector in improving and developing of country's handicraft industry is compiling and applying a strategy in concordance with the handicraft industry. In the offered model by the same study, combined marketing consists of five key factors of product, price tagging, promotion, distribution, artistic and historic authenticity. In this model, in addition to the four combined factors, there is a fifth factor called artistic and historical authenticity which will be discussed later. According to the five dimensions of combined marketing model, indices were designed for each one of these factors so that they could be studied. [Fig. 1].

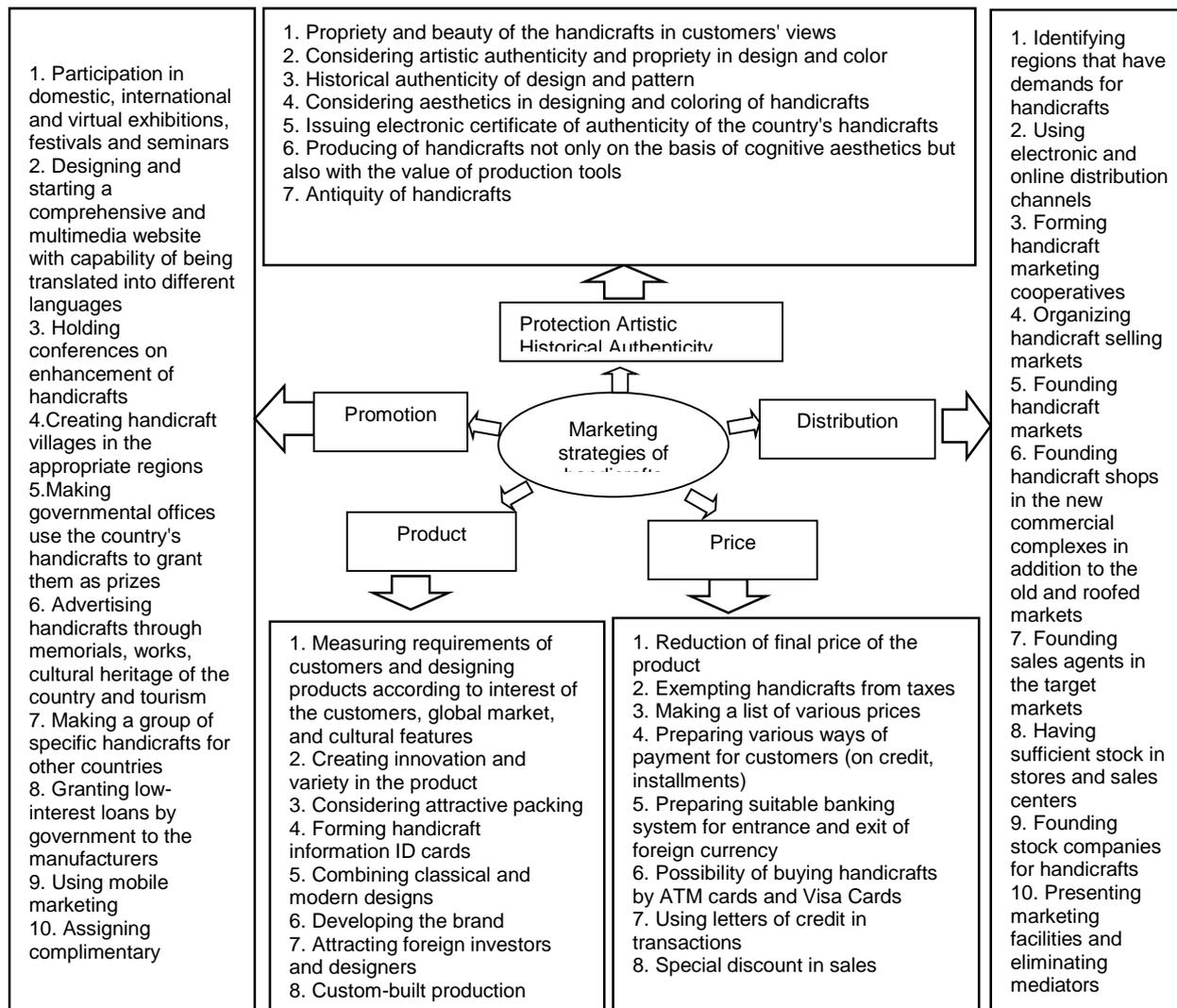


Fig. 1: Conceptual model of the research.

Product strategy

Product marketing decisions varies based on the type of retail outlet you run and your target audience. The factors that affect the perception of quality include packaging design, service plan options, warranty, colors, and materials [13]. A product is a set of tangible and intangible attributes, including packaging, color, price, manufacturer and retailer's prestige, manufacturer and retailer's services that the buyer may accept as the desired satisfaction [14]. Product planning and development can be found even in handicrafts. Handicrafts are the products of creativity and workmanship. Artisans usually strive for excellence in their crafts by undertaking product planning and development [9].

Place (distribution) strategy

A place or distribution channel is a way of transporting the product to the customer and the level of their accessibility to the products. This element of marketing mix strategy is similar to a vehicle for the other elements of marketing (product, price, and promotion). Without a place, customers will not have access to the products [15]. Distribution is an activity in which the company makes the product available for distribution and trade channels. The supplying chain is made of four links of manufacturer, factory, producer, distributor, wholesaler, and retails that offer the product to the consumer [11]. Handicrafts producers may sell their goods directly to their customers. Through the second channel, handicraft producers may sell the products to the private dealers, who in turn sell to the wide range of customers [9].

Promotion strategy

Promotion strategy is a part of a marketing strategy that should be harmoniously organized with marketing objectives and other marketing mix strategies [16]. Promotion refers to a set of activities which deal with expressing and exposing the product and making the customers contented of the product [17]. Promotion means an increase in the product selling through advertisement. It is one of the combined elements of

marketing that has a great role in selling a product or a service. As so, the company should have a precise definition according to the product popularity. Promotion could include activities for introduction or make relationship with the product in the target market for giving information about its features in order to change the attitudes or encouraging people to buy the product. The main purpose of promotion is giving information for persuading the customers to remember the company and marketing [11]. In general, sales promotion is designed to reinforce other factors of the promotion and to improve their short-term effectiveness [9].

### Pricing strategy

Price shows the amount of money people pay for the product. According so, price doesn't show the money exchange, but it represents characteristics of services, experience, and culture of the product [18]. Price, as one of the elements in marketing, is important in acceptance or rejection of the product by consumers. In addition, the price is a flexible element of marketing which changes fast. The ways of decision-making and the price tagging have an important role in every company's life [11]. Since price represents a base for what the firm receives for the marketed product or service, it is a main factor in the marketing mix strategy [19]. A bad point about using low price as a marketing strategy is that the customer may consider the low price product as an indication of compromised quality. When we are decided on the price, we must be fully aware of the brand and its integrity. Otherwise, we will reduce the profit margin without increasing the sales [20]. Handicraft articles price is determined by craftsman, master craftsman, dealer and co-operative societies. People's influence in fixing the prices differs from a craft to another. Dealers and co-operative societies are viewed as the majority of the respondents who affects the prices or handicrafts very much [9].

### Protection artistic and historical authenticity strategy

Since handicrafts are the products of human talent in marketing and facing their customers, it cannot be considered as industrial products produced machinery. Because of this, their artistic and historical authenticities cannot be ignored. The success of handicrafts depends on how manufacturers can produce a product that is accompanied by the interest and priorities of the consumers. Industrialization in every kind of art and handicraft should be recognized along with an innovation in the consumers' market through the exchange of goods in order to form the artistic and ethnic value [9]. On the other hand, Iran as one of the main producers with a glorious background in this industry can utilize this competitive advantage over other newcomer rivals to the market to create a specific value and attract a greater share of the market through making use of the existing treasures of scientific and intellectual capitals and paying attentions to the historical and artistic authenticities.

## RESULTS

In AHP method factors have to be compared two by two. And it has to be done by use of the scale that can be obtained from the same preference to an endless preference. It is designed by selecting numbers one-ninth to nine. While comparing two by two, at the beginning, the equivalent of the importance of two by two has to be carried out through a ranking method. Then, its accordant numerical value should be brought into the comparison table. After formation of a pair comparison matrix, the existing data should be normalized, and the method of measuring should be as the following; first, every datum of the paired comparison column is divided by collection of every column and measuring the average of lines. Hence, the priorities related to the main strategies are achieved [Table 1].

**Table 1:** Average of relative importance of main strategies

Main Strategies	Relative Weight	consistency Ratio
Product	0.342853907	0.02
Price	0.198685842	
Promotion	0.177771273	
Protection Artistic and historical authenticity	0.165149608	
Distribution	0.115539371	
Total	1	

The product strategy has the first priority among the main strategies. After that, the strategies of price, promotion, and protection artistic and historical authenticity have the following priorities. In the meantime, distribution strategy has the least importance. [Table 1].

After determining the relative weight of main strategies, relative weight of the indices for each strategy has to be determined as well. And at the end, the final weight of every index in the analytic hierarchical process is achieved by weighting the average and mixing the relative weight of criteria with relative weight of main strategies of their head categories [Table 2].

**Table 2:** Final and relative weight of main strategies and marketing indices in the field of handicrafts

Main Strategies	Indices	Relative Weight	Final Weight	consistency Ratio
Product	Measuring requirements of customers and designing products according to interest of the customers, global market, and cultural features	0.209	0.072	0.07
	Creating innovation and variety in the product	0.158	0.054	
	Considering attractive packing	0.149	0.051	
	Forming handicraft information ID cards	0.109	0.038	
	Combining classical and modern designs	0.104	0.035	
	Developing the brand	0.101	0.034	
	Attracting foreign investors and designers	0.091	0.031	
	Custom-built production	0.079	0.027	
Price	Reducing final price of the product	0.179	0.036	0.06
	Exempting handicrafts from taxes	0.166	0.033	
	Making a list of various prices	0.166	0.033	
	Preparing various ways of payment for customers (on credit, installments)	0.161	0.032	
	Preparing suitable banking system for entrance and exit of foreign currency	0.108	0.021	
	Possibility of buying handicrafts by ATM cards and Visa Cards	0.081	0.016	
	Using letters of credit in transactions	0.075	0.015	
	Special discount in sales	0.064	0.013	
Promotion	Participation in domestic, international and virtual exhibitions, festivals and seminars	0.145	0.026	0.04
	Designing and starting a comprehensive and multimedia website with capability of being translated into different languages	0.145	0.025	
	Holding conferences on enhancement of handicrafts	0.138	0.025	
	Creating handicraft villages in the appropriate regions	0.137	0.024	
	Making governmental offices use the country's handicrafts to grant them as prizes	0.096	0.017	
	Advertising handicrafts through memorials, works, cultural heritage of the country and tourism	0.084	0.015	
	Making a group of specific handicrafts for other countries	0.082	0.015	
	Granting low-interest loans by government to the manufacturers	0.078	0.014	
	Using mobile marketing	0.053	0.009	
	Assigning complimentary	0.044	0.008	
Protection Artistic and Historical Authenticity	Propriety and beauty of the handicrafts in customers' views	0.149	0.0244	0.06
	Considering artistic authenticity and propriety in design and color	0.147	0.0243	
	Historical authenticity of design and pattern	0.143	0.023	
	Considering aesthetics in designing and coloring of handicrafts	0.142	0.024	
	Issuing electronic certificate of authenticity of the country's handicrafts	0.141	0.023	
	Producing of handicrafts not only on the basis of cognitive aesthetics but also with the value of production tools	0.139	0.023	
	Antiquity of handicrafts	0.137	0.023	
Distribution	Identifying regions that have demands for handicrafts	0.178	0.021	0.07
	Using electronic and online distribution channels	0.132	0.015	
	Forming handicraft marketing cooperatives	0.129	0.014	
	Organizing handicraft selling markets	0.109	0.013	
	Founding handicraft markets	0.108	0.012	
	Founding handicraft shops in the new commercial complexes in addition to the old and roofed markets	0.096	0.011	
	Founding sales agents in the target markets	0.075	0.008	
	Having sufficient stock in stores and sales centers	0.064	0.007	
	Founding stock companies for handicrafts	0.059	0.006	
	Presenting marketing facilities and removing mediators	0.049	0.005	

among the indices of product strategy, measuring the requirements of the customers and designing according to their interests, global markets and cultural features are considered as the initial priorities among the indices of price, reduction of final price of the product, strategy promotion, participation in domestic strategy, international, and virtual exhibitions, festivals and seminars. In the of protection artistic and historical authenticity, beauty of handicrafts in customers' views, and in the strategy of distribution, the identification of demands region for handicraft products are also the foremost priorities[Table 2].



Fig. 2: Final weight of indices in the five main groups.

Measuring customers' requirements and designing the products according to their interests, global markets and cultural features, innovation and variety in products, considering attractive packaging, preparing information ID cards for handicrafts, combining classic and modern designs, reducing the total price of the product, brand development, and exempting handicrafts from taxes are the highest priorities among all indices in the five main groups. All of the above mentioned indices belong to the two main factors of product and price as the most important ones among the five factors. [Fig. 2].

## CONCLUSION

Considering the high prices of handicrafts, identifying marketing strategies of handicrafts and identifying higher privileged factors compared to that of the other ones are big and main steps in succession of handicraft industry. Identifying key strategies of handicrafts shows that the elements effective for reaching an acceptable development of the handicraft industry have to be recognized and key decisions have to be made on about. The results from Delphi process in three stages showed that in the studied group there are five strategies and 43 indices for handicrafts. According to the related literature, in addition to the four combined factors of marketing, views of elites and the conducted interviews has introduced a fifth factor called protection artistic and historical authenticity in handicrafts marketing. After that, ranking and analyzing the existing indices in this model were performed. Ranking main strategies of handicrafts showed that strategy of product has the first priority among the main strategies; and among its indices, measuring requirements of customers, designing products according to the interests of customers, global markets and cultural features are the most important indices. Introducing innovation and variety in the product is in the second place and custom-built production has the lowest importance, relatively. The strategy of price stands in the second position. Out of the indices of price, reduction of the final price of the products has the first priority. Exempting handicrafts from taxes is in the second place, and giving a discount during the sale has the least priority. The strategy of promotion stands in the third place among the main strategies; and out of its indices, participation in domestic, international and virtual exhibitions, seminars and conferences owns the first priorities. Designing and starting comprehensive and multimedia websites along with their capability of being translated into different languages stand in the second place. However, assigning complimentary items has the least priority. The strategy of protection artistic and historical authenticity has the fourth rank among the main strategies. Out of the indices of artistic and historical authenticity, propriety and beauty of handicrafts in the customers' perspective have the first rank. Considering the artistic authenticity and the propriety in color and design stand in the second position. The antiquity of handicrafts goes about the last priority. The last strategy is distribution. Out of the indices of distribution, identification of regions that have demands for handicraft products stands as the first priority. Applying electronic and online distribution is in the second priority, and presenting marketing facilities and removing mediators are the last priorities.

Measuring the final weights and ranking key indices of handicraft marketing strategies show that out of 43 identified indices, measuring requirements of customers and designing products according to the interest of customers, global markets and cultural features, creating innovation and variety in the products, considering attractive packing, preparing information ID cards for handicrafts, combining classic and modern designs, reduction of final price of the product, developing the brand, and exempting handicraft industry from paying taxes are the utmost important indices among all indices in the five main groups. All of the mentioned criteria belong to the two strategies of product and price the most important ones among the five main factors.

In an article titled "Strategy and success factors of handicraft section in handicrafts of Mexico" identified the effective factors of success in the handicraft sector of Mexico on the basis of analyzing strategies of marketing as strategies that use P4 which are in the form of product (packing, product variety, product information). 23 factors that the manufacturers use for success are identified as marketing strategies. Analysis showed that manufacturers mostly use product strategy, although promotion and price strategies are almost important, they mostly use the strategy of place [21]. In an article entitled "Studying the strategies of handicraft marketing among the manufacturers of Uttar Pradesh and their consequences" he identified "P4" of marketing i.e. product, price, promotion, and place as the strategies of marketing. This paper is descriptive on its method and the results of information have been presented from the secondary data [14].

Considering the survey results and determined priorities, it is suggested that efforts to be made in relation to the identification of customers' requirements and designing the product according to their interest of customers, global market, and cultural features. It is also suggested that for improvement of the quality of products, a research center is established for modern innovations in production and marketing research. There should be arrangements for reduction of the final price of the product and also exempting handicrafts from paying taxes. It is suggested that handicrafts to be produced affordable for all classes of the society; they shouldn't be accessible for just a specific class. The way out of this problem is that by an increase of production, creation of competition among producers and movement towards mass production, we should decrease the final price of every product. It is only then that cheaper products can enter the baskets of all families and can add to the more flourishing of this industry. Participation in domestic, international and virtual exhibitions, festivals and seminars, and the creation of a comprehensive and multimedia website with the capability of being translated into different languages should be considered and targeted.

**SUPPLEMENT ISSUE**

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

There is no any form of conflict of interested.

**FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE**

No financial support was received for this work.

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